



Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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It's Official: Mark Ridley-Thomas Sworn-in as L.A. County Second District Supervisor

***History is made as he becomes the first ever African-American
male to hold the powerful Board of Supervisors seat***

LOS ANGELES COUNTY -- With his family and friends at his side, Mark Ridley-Thomas was officially sworn in Monday as the Los Angeles County Supervisor representing the Second District, becoming the first ever African-American male to be elected to the five member board.

During the noon ceremony witnessed by hundreds of well wishers in the standing-room only Board of Supervisors hearing room, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas officially assumed the post, occupied for the last 16 years by now retired Yvonne B. Burke.

Administered by San Francisco City and County District Attorney, Kamala D. Harris, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas proudly recited the oath of office, and to a roaring applause, accepted the many responsibilities and challenges that come with serving such a unique district.

With over 2.5 million residents, the Second District is the most diverse with respect to ethnicity and socio-economic status.

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Its cities include Carson, Compton, Culver City, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lynwood, and portions of the City of Los Angeles and unincorporated sections of south and southwest Los Angeles County.

With the theme of “Change in the Second District,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas began his address by thanking the many the volunteers, campaign committee members, elected officials, and community religious leaders who supported him during the hotly contested Supervisors campaign.

Referring to the writings in famed Princeton University professor and civil rights leader Cornel West’s latest book *Hope on a Tightrope*, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas echoed the scholar’s call for civic engagement with an emphasis on leadership. “Leadership is fundamental,” he said, quoting West. “There can be no significant social movement without visionary and analytical leadership by people of courage and integrity.”

Sharing the words of another respected author and leader, Children’s Defense Fund Founder Marian Wright Edelman, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas quoted from her latest book *Charting the Course for the Next Generation*. In her writings, Edelman insisted that “ordinary citizens must organize and make their leaders lead.”

Addressing the 680 supporters in the packed hearing room and an overflow audience of over 500 seated outside, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas introduced an ambitious agenda that outlined his priorities, including healthcare, jobs, and public safety. More specifically, he reinforced his intent to reopen Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital for the residents of the Second District.

Noting that no single member of the Board can reopen the hospital by themselves, he announced that he would be on the grounds of the Willowbrook facility early Tuesday morning to make his first public statement regarding his initiative to ‘jump start’ the process of reopening the much needed hospital.

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"I fully expect that my colleagues on the board will look to me for leadership in this matter," he said.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas also vowed to renew the fight against predatory lending practices in the County and to aggressively push for a new agenda to address gang violence and the creation of jobs.

To strengthen communities in the Second District, he pledged to adopt the best practices employed by block clubs, neighborhood associations and councils. "I intend to take the 20-year project of civic engagement, namely the Empowerment Congress (successfully implemented as a councilmember in the Eight Council District) to a new level of activism for the people of the Second Supervisorial District. We can do this, we will do this," he said.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas concluded his address by urging the Second District community to join him as he expands the boundaries of participatory democracy in order to transform the Second District.

"This is a period for great change," he told the audience. "We are the Second Supervisorial District and together we are the keys to change."

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